

# Letter from Taizé

Bimonthly 3.50 FF

1

February - March 1993

Translated into 46 languages (including 21 languages of Asia), this letter was written by Brother Roger during the time of preparation for Christmas, while young people and children from Bosnia-Sarajevo were staying in Taizé. It was written for the European meeting of young people that brought together for six days in Vienna, from 28 December 1992 to 2 January 1993, 105,000 young adults from all the countries of Eastern and Western Europe. This European meeting is a stage in the *pilgrimage of trust on earth* animated by Taizé. The *Letter Awaken to a Joy* will be reflected on during the *meetings of young people* that will be held in Taizé week after week during the entire year of 1993.

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## AWAKEN TO A JOY

L E T T E R 1 9 9 3

Wonder! Even with just a little bit of faith, happy are they who dispose themselves to welcome a Gospel light! "It shines in the darkness and the darkness could not extinguish it."<sup>1</sup>

However murky or opaque your being, the humble, the quite humble trusting of faith wafts through you like a breath of life.<sup>2</sup>

When darkness and doubts challenge you, keep them at arm's length. Often they are only gaps of unbelief, nothing more. For you this prayer: "Jesus Christ, inner Light, do not let my darkness speak to me!"<sup>3</sup>

Worrying about what you are or what you are not leads nowhere.<sup>4</sup>

The most important thing lies elsewhere. Joy and peace of heart are vital values for those who want to live lives rooted in Christ.<sup>5</sup>

When wonder begins to die out, will you go so far as to question Christ Jesus:

...but what is going on in me? Why these times when perseverance in following you becomes exhausted? And, while seeking you, how could I linger over suggestions so foreign to the Gospel? Without realizing it, I was

1 John 1,5.

2 Faith always remains a humble trust in God. In the depths of the human condition is found the longing for a presence, the silent desire for a communion, and this simple desire for God is already the beginning of faith. Even if we understand very little all the profundity of the realities of God, that little is enough; that "almost nothing" already enables us to follow Christ.

3 Saint Augustine (354-430), in his *Confessions*. When our own darkness invites us to speak with it, we are caught up in a dizzying spiral. We enter into dialogue not with the Risen Christ, but with what hurts us both in ourselves and in others.

4 "It is easier than we think to hate ourselves. To forget ourselves is a grace. But if all pride were dead in us, the grace of graces would be to love ourselves humbly, like any one of the suffering members of Jesus Christ." (Bernanos)

5 Anxiety and fear can undermine the confident trusting of faith. In the Gospel, Christ tells us, "I leave you my peace; peace is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid" (John 14,27). And again: "May my joy be in you and may your joy be complete" (John 15,11).

6 Jeremiah 2,13.

7 In an inner prayer, we can entrust to Christ, at once and at every moment, what worries or preoccupies us. For example, during a conversation, we can find the freedom to pray for the other person without their realizing it.

8 The mysterious presence of the Risen Christ is always in us. It is as if he were saying to each of us: "Don't you know that I am at your side and that by the Holy Spirit I live in you?"



digging "cracked cisterns that did not hold the living water."<sup>6</sup> Explain me to myself!

In you, a living spring. At this spring Christ will speak to you. And you will listen to his voice, in days of peace as well as in days of gloom.<sup>7</sup>

The incredible thing about the Gospel is that the Risen Christ is always waiting for us,<sup>8</sup> and there is always that same call: "Come, follow me!"<sup>9</sup>

"A joy beyond words that already transfigures us... without having seen him, we love him."<sup>10</sup> One day you will respond to him: "Even if it may happen that I abandon you, you know that I love you, perhaps not as I would like to, but I do love you."

The Holy Spirit prepares in you a reorientation of mind and heart... a conversion. What does that mean? What God asks of you above all is to surrender yourself to Christ and to welcome his love.<sup>11</sup> "All God can give is his love."<sup>12</sup>

And what discoveries! His love becomes tangible. A burning in the soul, it sets you on fire, even to the point of forgetting yourself. It animates the inexhaustible goodness of a human heart.

When your limitations and a feeling of inferiority unsettle you, with surprise you will come to realize that prestigious gifts or great abilities are not the road to fulfillment, but a charity full of trust.

Trust is at hand... Whoever has experienced in their youth the approach of death senses that, even more than the body, the depths of the self are first and foremost in need of a healing.

Even a childhood or youth that has been humiliated can give rise to creative forces.<sup>13</sup>

Are you going through periods when everything appears to be all dried up? At those times when nothing seems able to bloom, with almost nothing, in you a desert flower blossoms.<sup>14</sup>

Does not the Gospel invite us to welcome the Holy Spirit in that part of ourselves where the heart of our childhood remains?<sup>15</sup>

The wonder of a joy for all who set out on the road again and again! Will they be like birds singing in a thorn

9 When confronted with Christ's call "Come, follow me" (Matthew 19,21), some people hesitate and at times ask themselves: "Is the flame in me going to go out?" We should remember that we are not the ones who lit that flame. Our faith never creates God. Nor will our doubts ever put an end to God's existence.

10 1 Peter 1,8.

11 Jesus the Christ calls us to a conversion (*metanoia*) which is a kind of inner reorientation (Mark 1,15). Jesus does not invite us to withdraw into ourselves, but to repentance of heart—that movement of trusting by which we place in him all our faults.

12 Isaac the Syrian (seventh century).

13 Christ passes through our frailties, our failures, our inner nights, communicating to them something of his presence. He transforms our depths. He transfigures them. Saint Paul expresses this reality with profound intuition: "It is when I am weak that I acquire strength in God" (cf. 2 Corinthians 12,10).

14 Happy those who, by the trusting of faith, dispose themselves to live in the present day, and the present day alone! The Holy Spirit will sustain them to the very end. And every day becomes God's today. And it becomes clear that the presence of the Holy Spirit is Gospel freshness, like a poem filled with intuitions light as air.

15 Cf. Matthew 11,25.

16 "I am like a bird singing in a thorn bush." (John XXIII)

17 "Clothe yourself in joy... Purify your heart of evil sadness and you will live for God. All those will live for God who have shed the garments of sadness to clothe themselves in joy." (Hermas, a century after the death of Christ)

18 Without forgiveness, misunderstandings can develop and degenerate into hatred. How can we build reconciliation around ourselves and in the human family unless we reject hatred?

19 Cf. Luke 6,35-36.

20 1 Peter 2,23.

21 It can happen that the human heart is inhabited by a secret fear of God. People say to themselves: "God is going to punish me!" In Bangladesh, there was a cyclone. One of the brothers of Taizé who have lived there for the past seventeen years, sharing the life of the poorest of the poor, wrote: "After the cyclone, our neighbours asked us: Why all these misfortunes? Have we sinned so much against God?" The Gospel tells us clearly that Christ Jesus did not come to earth to judge the world but so that, through the Risen Christ, every human being might be saved, reconciled (John 3,17). God is not the cause of fear, or anguish, or human distress. God wishes neither wars, nor earthquakes, nor the violence of accidents. God is innocent of all this. And Christ calls upon us to take responsibilities to reduce human suffering on earth.



## FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE FIVE CONTINENTS

Throughout the world, on this eve of the third millenium, we are confronted with unexpected urgencies. What does this mean for you to "open ways of peace-making where mistrust, violence and hatred spring up?" Will you seek to gather all your energy in order to avert old and new forms of hatred that destroy creative impulses? Among these urgencies, how can we be attentive to children who are victims through the loss of the affection of the people closest to them?

## FOR YOUNG EUROPEANS

In Europe, now that one wall cutting the continent in two has fallen, who wants to see other walls rise up to break apart the continent? How can we build a Europe that is less worried about affirming its identities than opening up to the courage of its future? Europe needs to leave behind a period of mistrust and suspicion and enter into a time of trust and reconciliations. How can we manage not to let the hour of reconciliations slip by, an hour that could be crucial in the history of Europe?

The need to render the earth more fit to live in, wherever it may be, demands great material means. They are indis-

pensable. But if one day we were to find ourselves in highly technological societies, where the thirst for reconciliation, trust of heart, the sources of the humble trusting of faith had disappeared, what would the future of Europe be? Far from saying "nothing to be done", how can we find, in the humble trusting of faith, the impetus to rise up like signs of what we never dared hope for?

In the face of the rift between generations in Europe, new ways have to be created. For example, why do the younger generations join so little with older people to pray in the churches, and why do they leave them isolated in their homes?

Moroseness is a plague in society.

# Consulting the Young

Each participant in the European meeting is being consulted, in the confidence that in this way we can better discover what Christ is expecting of us. When you get home, perhaps in meeting together with others, it will be important to reply to the following questions drawn from the letter "Awaken to a Joy". Send your reply, with your name and address, to 71250 Taizé Community, France.

How then can we draw from the source of Christ a joy, even a little one? Joy is always linked to peace of heart. And the beauty of common prayer wakens and stimulates a joy.

Christ did not come to create a religion but a communion ... and "all God can give is his love". What Gospel way can we open up so that Christians may be reconciled through love, and love alone? Their beautiful vocation leads them not to run away from responsibilities but to be leaven of reconciliation and trust in the human family.

To each one of you, in the trusting of my heart,

*Brother Roger of Taizé*

During the European meeting in Vienna, the 105,000 young people met in huge halls transformed into places of prayer. Everything was translated into nineteen languages.





Brother Roger, Prior of the Taizé Community  
Dear Brother,

Informed of the fifteenth European meeting of young people in Vienna, from 28 December to 2 January, a new stage in the "pilgrimage of trust on earth" where you continue to reflect with the young on the theme "inner life and human solidarities," to be witnesses to a Europe which is united, reconciled and living in peace, the Holy Father expresses his warm encouragement to the young participants.

Through this gathering, the young are manifesting their desire to contribute to the building up of the European Continent, placing at the heart of its construction the values of reconciliation and solidarity. As the message for the world day of peace, on 1 January 1993, "If you seek peace, go towards the poor," invites us, they are called to undertake prophetic gestures which demonstrate that peace, concern for our brothers and sisters, and reconciliation are the foundations of a just and fraternal society.

Nevertheless, it is not by our own human resources that we will achieve this, but by the graces received from God, in sacramental life, in the life of the Church, in personal and community prayer. The Gospel urges us to offer forgiveness and love to our brothers and sisters for, as the Apostle Paul tells us, "the love of Christ impels us" (2 Cor 5,14). Welcoming someone who is poor as a brother or sister reveals to that person the tenderness of God and the beauty of his or her humanity, helps him or her to rise up and to rediscover the hope revealed in the mystery of Christmas: the Son of God came to assume our flesh totally, to call us to share even his glory. Above and beyond this, fraternal sharing brings with it perfect joy, a gift of the Father.

The Pope wishes that this meeting may be for many young people a witness that the life of society can be based on something other than profit and consumption, if each person agrees to undergo a conversion and to consent to charity in order to offer every human being the place which is his or hers by right. Entrusting them to the motherly tenderness of the Virgin Mary, who hastened to visit her cousin Elizabeth, the Holy Father sends to all who will take part in this gathering, to the families and the parishes that will open their doors to them, as well as to the community of Brothers of Taizé who are animating the meeting, his apostolic Blessing.

#### **PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEOS OF CONSTANTINOPLE**

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

It is with a special paternal joy that we have received news of the convocation in Vienna, from this coming 28 December to 2 January, of the fifteenth European meeting of young people, organized in the context of the ministry which the beloved community of Taizé exercises with the younger generation.

In the face of an anguished world and in a society in search of its identity, the main theme of this meeting, "inner life and human solidarities," seems more than promising to us.

We are reaching the end of the second millennium, alas, as witnesses to the failure of human beings to allow the Lord's peace to reign in Europe and in the world, and to live in harmony with their neighbours as well as with the environment in which they have been placed. That is why we rejoice at the perspective of hearing young people, the future of our Churches and of our continent, speak to us of their aspirations versa concerning their hope of seeing a Europe reconciled with God, with itself and with the world around it.

On the occasion of the feast of the Nativity and the new year, we send to all our patriarchal blessing and we pray that the Incarnate God may grant his grace and his infinite mercy to the participants in this promising meeting.

#### **THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS, BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI**

Once again, you have come together to celebrate peace and friendship between peoples. It is faith that brings you together, an ecumenical, tolerant faith, open to vast horizons. Such a gathering cannot but move the Secretary General that I am: for, beyond the message proper to one church, you embrace the bonds of solidarity and love which link, or should link, all human beings. Thanks to cultural differences which both distinguish human beings and bring them together through dialogue, you address to the world a message of universality and shared love, where each person recognizes in another another self.

As Secretary General of the United Nations, I can only encourage you to go forward. Your combats for peace and for greater generosity between peoples are also those of the United Nations Organization: we are therefore, as you know, allies and friends united in a common commitment; we are always close.

I would like to take the opportunity of this message to express the admiration that Brother Roger has inspired in me for a long time. He began an undertaking in the darkest hours of the history of France which, for more than fifty years now, has illuminated the Gospel message. The road travelled, the echo awakened in the young should inspire all people to keep faith in the best of themselves, that is, in every undertaking of conviction and dignity, human as well as spiritual.

#### **THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, GEORGE CAREY**

My dear Roger and good friend,

It is with very great joy that I greet you as you meet with young adults from throughout Europe at your meeting in Vienna. I have always had great admiration for the work of Taizé, and now even more so since my own pilgrimage there last August with 1,000 young Anglicans. I was profoundly moved by my experience during that week and I know that the young people who came with me will also have been marked by their experience of prayer and reconciliation.

During my week with the Community I was particularly moved by the atmosphere of prayer and meditation. The three times of prayer each day consecrated the life of all those present to God. It was remarkable to see people praying in the Chapel from the early morning until late at night. It was also so encouraging to see young people meeting together from throughout Europe, and indeed throughout the world, and talking together in an atmosphere of joyful celebration.

We continue to celebrate the renewal which Europe has experienced in these past four years politically. We know, of course, that tragedy continues to be present alongside joy. We think particularly of the people of former Yugoslavia at this time. We realise also that there are still many uncertainties which will need to be resolved. This is another reason why I write with such enthusiasm this greeting to you as you meet in Vienna. For more than fifty years now Taizé has been a sign of reconciliation between peoples and I pray with confidence that this meeting will be a further step towards greater friendship and understanding between peoples. All this takes place within the context of our common worship and love of God through his Son Jesus Christ.

As you reflect on the great questions of our time: of how human hope can be sustained on earth, of how the earth can be made a place that is more fit to live in and of how we can build both trust in Europe and solidarity with the poor in the Southern Continents, please be assured of our prayers here in this country.

## **THESE FIVE MESSAGES WERE SENT FOR THE EUROPEAN MEETING OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN VIENNA**

#### **THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA, MR. THOMAS KLESTIL**

*wanted to take part personally in one of the evening prayers of the European meeting. Beforehand he sent the following message:*

I wish you all a warm welcome in Vienna for this stage in the pilgrimage of trust on earth begun by Taizé.

The previous stages have taken place in Wrocław, Prague and Budapest, cities of that Eastern Europe where great upheavals in society have occurred. Full of hope, the people of those countries have looked to their neighbours in the West without whose heart and hands the material and spiritual reconstruction of the East is not possible.

Today we have to ask ourselves: has the bridge been built successfully? Has the newly united Europe, with its culture steeped in Christian faith for almost 2000 years, managed to bring together brothers and sisters separated for such a long time to "bear one another's burdens"?

At a time marked by fear of the future, lack of solidarity and isolation, we are in need of a sign that is lived out and that is convincing. We need a stirring sign of trust full of hope. We need the living optimism and the joyful gathering of young believers.

The European meeting in the spirit of the Taizé Community represents such a sign. I hope that through it, many hearts will be changed and steps towards the unity of the human family will be undertaken.

## **Letter from Taizé**

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Correspondence: Letter from Taizé,  
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# MEDITATING ON THE WORD MARCH

# JOHANNINE HOURS

DEUTERONOMY 5,32 - 6,9

**1 MON** Jesus said: In truth I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.

**2 TUE** The Lord says: As the rain and the snow come down from the sky and do not return before having watered the earth and made it fertile, so is it with the word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me before having achieved its purpose.

**3 WED** The Lord says to his people: I remember the faithful love of your youth, when you followed me through the desert.

**4 THU** The Lord said of his people: They have forsaken me, the fount of living water, and have dug themselves cracked cisterns that will not hold water.

**5 FRI** The Lord says: I take no pleasure in the death of anyone. Turn to me and live!

**6 SAT** The Word is very near you, it is on your lips and in your heart for you to put it into practice.

**7 SUN** On the mountain of the Transfiguration a bright cloud covered the disciples and a voice said: This is my beloved Son, on whom my favour rests; listen to him.

**8 MON** Jesus said: Give, and it will be given to you. A full measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For the measure you use will be the measure used for you.

**9 TUE** The Lord says: Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

**10 WED** Jeremiah said: When your words came, Lord, I devoured them: your word was my delight and the joy of my heart.

**11 THU** The father of the prodigal son said to his elder son, "It is only right that we should celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!"

**12 FRI** The flock you chose, Lord, lives confined in a forest with meadow land all around: shepherd your people and lead them to pasture.

**13 SAT** What God can compare with you, Lord, for pardoning sin and overlooking transgression? You will again have compassion on us, treading our sins underfoot.

**14 SUN** Jesus said to the Samaritan woman: If you only knew what God is offering and who it is who is saying to you, "Give me something to drink", you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water.

**15 MON** Jesus said: Anyone who drinks the water I give will never be thirsty again. The water I give them will become a spring of water within them, welling up to eternal life.

**16 TUE** We now put all our heart into following you, God, and seeking your face. Rescue us in accordance with your wonderful deeds.

**17 WED** We called on the Lord, the God of our fathers, and he heard our cry. God saw our misery, our toil and oppression and brought us out of the land of slavery.

**18 THU** The Lord says: Listen to my voice, then I will be your God and you will be my people. In everything, follow the way that I will mark out for your happiness.

**19 FRI** St JOSEPH The Wisdom of God led the upright along straight paths and showed them the realities of the kingdom of God.

**20 SAT** Let us strive to know the Lord; that he will come is as certain as the dawn. He will come to us like the rain of springtime upon the earth.

**21 SUN** Jesus said to his disciples: We must do the work of the one who sent me, while the daylight lasts. The night is coming, no one can work then. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

**22 MON** The Lord says: See, I am going to create new heavens and a new earth. Be filled with rejoicing for ever, for I am creating my people to be gladness.

**23 TUE** Jeremiah said: The word of the Lord has brought insult and derision upon me. And so I said to myself, "I shall not think about him, I shall no longer speak in his name." But there seemed to be a burning fire in my heart, which I could not contain.

**24 WED** The Lord says: My people will not go hungry or thirsty, they will not be scorched by the heat of the desert, for the one who has compassion on them will be with them, guiding them to springs of water.

**25 THU** The angel said to Mary: Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

**26 FRI** Jesus said: My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. If anyone is prepared to do God's will they will discover whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

**27 SAT** The souls of the just are in the hands of God and no torment can touch them.

**28 SUN** Jesus said to Martha: I am the resurrection. The one who believes in me shall live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

**29 MON** The Lord says: My servant does not cry out or raise his voice. Faithfully he will present what is just; he will not falter or be discouraged until he has established justice on the earth.

**30 TUE** Jesus said: I do nothing of myself, but I say what the Father has taught me, and the one who sent me is with me.

**31 WED** Jesus said: If you make my word your home, you will indeed be my disciples. You will come to know the truth and the truth will set you free.

*Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.*

In this text, God's commandments are compared to a road or way. God traced out this way by his acts of kindness, and now human beings are called to walk in God's footsteps in order to become more and more in the image of God (cf. Lev 19,2). The image of a road is a dynamic one: by following the way of the Lord, people move towards a fuller life and thus find true happiness.

A series of three verbs expresses how human beings should behave toward the commandments: "listen - keep - observe" (6,3). First of all comes listening (cf. 6,4): discovering all that God has already done for us (cf. 6,20-25), how deeply he has become committed to us by an unbreakable covenant. Then this knowledge must penetrate our whole being, in the image of Mary who "treasured faithfully all these words/things in her heart" (Luke 2,51; cf. 2,19). And finally, this gift which has been interiorized will lead us to observe the commandments; knowledge will turn into an act of thanksgiving.

For God takes so seriously the dignity of his partner that he anxiously awaits a response. God does not merely want to be the Giver: his covenant requires a reciprocal relationship. The essential meaning of the commandments is to allow human beings to express this reciprocity faithfully. That is why all the commandments can be summed up in the call to love the Lord with one's whole being (6,5).

So when Jesus speaks of the twofold commandment of love (Matt 22,38-44) and explains that God's love in us is manifested by the love we have for one another (cf. 1 John 4,19-21), he reveals the true significance of the first Law (Matt 5,17-19).

- Concretely, how can we, by the way we live, express our gratefulness to God for his love towards us?
- How can we live out the call to "listen - keep - observe" in order to grow in love? Why is faithfulness so important in this respect?



# MEDITATING ON THE WORD

## APRIL

# JOHANNINE HOURS

ISAIAH 51,9-11

*These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.*

**1 THU** **Is 50.8-10** **Jn 8.51-59**  
The Lord is coming to my help. Who then can condemn me?

**2 FRI** **Is 53.1-5** **Jn 10.31-39**  
The servant of the Lord bore our suffering. We have been healed by his wounds.

**3 SAT** **Ezk 37.26-28** **Jn 11.45-57**  
The Lord says: I shall make a covenant of peace with my people, and it will be an eternal covenant. I shall set my sanctuary among them for ever.

**4 SUN** **Mt 21.1-11** **Ph 2.6-11**  
**PALM SUNDAY**  
See, your king is approaching, humble and riding on a donkey and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.

**5 MON** **Mt 26.30-46** **Mt 26.47-68**  
Jesus said to his disciples: Stay awake, and pray not to be put to the test. The spirit is willing, but human nature is weak.

**6 TUE** **Mk 15.1-32** **Mk 14.32-72**  
They led Jesus out to crucify him. They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha where they crucified him.

**7 WED** **Lk 23.26-46** **Lk 23.1-12**  
On the cross, Jesus said: Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.

**8 THU** **Jn 13.1-15** **Lk 22.7-23**  
Jesus, knowing that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father, having loved those who were his in the world, now loved them to the end.

**9 FRI** **Jn 19.1-37** **Jn 18.28-40**  
**GOOD FRIDAY**  
On the cross, Jesus said, "It is fulfilled", and bowing his head he gave up his spirit.

**10 SAT** **Jb 19.25-26** **Mt 27.62-66**  
Job said: I know that my redeemer lives and that in the end he will take his stand upon the earth.

**11 SUN** **Jn 20.11-18** **Col 3.1-4**  
**EASTER DAY**  
The Risen Christ said to Mary of Magdala: Go and find my brothers and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

**12 MON** **Lk 24.13-49** **Ac 2.14,22-28**  
Having recognized the Risen Christ, the disciples at Emmaus set out that moment and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven who said to them, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon."

**13 TUE** **Mt 28.1-8** **Ac 2.36-41**  
The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid: I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen as he said he would."

**14 WED** **Ac 3.1-10** **Mt 28.9-20**  
Peter said to the crippled man, "I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!"

**15 THU** **Jn 20.19-23** **Ac 3.11-21**  
The Risen Christ breathed upon his disciples and said: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.

**16 FRI** **Ac 4.1-12** **Jn 21.4-14**  
Christ, the stone the builders rejected, has become the cornerstone.

**17 SAT** **Ac 4.13-21** **Mk 16.1-8**  
When the Sanhedrin forbade them to speak in the name of Jesus, Peter and John replied, "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

**18 SUN** **Jn 20.24-31** **Ac 2.42-47**  
Jesus said to Thomas: You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

**19 MON** **Ac 4.32-37** **Jn 3.1-8**  
All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but they shared everything they had.

**20 TUE** **Jn 3.7-15** **Ac 5.27-33**  
Everyone who believes in Christ will have eternal life.

**21 WED** **Ac 5.34-42** **Jn 3.16-17**  
Glad to have had the honour of suffering for the name of Christ, the first disciples continued to teach and proclaim the good news of Christ Jesus, both in the temple and in people's homes.

**22 THU** **Jn 3.18-21** **Ac 7.51-8.1**  
Jesus said: Whoever acts according to the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he is doing is done in God.

**23 FRI** **Ac 8.1-8** **Jn 6.1-15**  
The believers who had been scattered during the persecution went from place to place proclaiming the good news of the Gospel.

**24 SAT** **Ac 9.1-22** **Lk 24.1-12**  
As Paul was approaching the city of Damascus, a light from heaven shone around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" he asked, and the reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

**25 SUN** **Lk 24.13-35** **Ac 2.14-23**  
When he was at table with two disciples, the Risen Christ took bread, said the blessing, broke the bread and began to give it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

**26 MON** **Jn 6.22-29** **Ac 11.3-18**  
Jesus said: Do not work for food that spoils, but for the food that endures for eternal life.

**27 TUE** **Ac 11.19-22** **Jn 6.30-35**  
The Lord helped those who were proclaiming the good news, and a great number of people believed and turned to God.

**28 WED** **Jn 6.35-40** **Ac 13.26-33**  
Jesus said: The will of the one who sent me is that I should lose nothing of all he has given me, but that I should raise it up on the last day.

**29 THU** **Ac 13.34-43** **Jn 6.44-51**  
Through Christ, forgiveness of sins is offered to everyone who believes.

**30 FRI** **Jn 6.60-69** **Ac 13.44-49**  
Seeing that many of his disciples were turning away, Jesus said to the Twelve, "What about you, do you want to go away too?" Peter answered, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life."

*Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.*

What remains for God's people when the worst has happened, no comfort can be found in the present and future prospects appear barren? What does remain is the memory of the "marvels" God performed in the past to give life and happiness to his own. But what attitude should we adopt towards this glorious past?

One possibility is known as nostalgia. In order to forget a dismal present, we flee to past joys. Our imagination lingers in a paradise that becomes more and more illusory. The prophet of the Exile combats this flight into unreality with all his strength (cf. Isa 43,18).

Then there is a use of memory which is life-giving. It involves the trust that the same God who was present earlier for his people is still with them, ready to perform the miracle of a new life here and now. Thus the prayer in verses 9-10 evokes God's victory over chaos at the origin of the world (symbolized by the defeat of the sea monsters) as well as the crossing of the Red Sea during the exodus from Egypt. Then the faithful, with a note of insistence which is not doubt but rather trust painfully affirming itself in the midst of contradictory appearances ("awake, rise up!"), ask God to demonstrate his creative power now by bringing them home from captivity. And in verse 11 the prophet proclaims his conviction that this new creative and liberating act of God is certain; it will cause a joy to spring up that can transfigure the universe.

- Through what events or signs have I discovered the creative and liberating presence of God in my life?
- What form can the temptation of nostalgia take for us? How can we view "bygone days" as a well-spring that makes it possible to face the present with courage?
- According to this text, where can we find true joy?



bush? <sup>16</sup> "They will live for God, those who have shed the garments of sadness to clothe themselves in joy." <sup>17</sup>

**O**n this eve of the third millenium, we are confronted with unexpected urgencies. They will stimulate us to take on responsibilities and to question ourselves.

While rapid changes are shaking societies, will we be among those who expand the fine hope of a new future for the human family?

To prepare this new future, who will open ways of peacemaking where mistrust and violence spring up? Who will refuse to keep alive the memory of past humiliations? Who will support those who struggle against hatred and look for reconciliations? <sup>18</sup>

Who will sustain freedoms, in places where they are still quite young?

The call to reconciliation leaves us exposed. Loving, forgiving those who oppose us, <sup>19</sup> is a miracle in a life.

Far from putting us to sleep, reconciliation keeps us alert. A trusting heart refuses intrigues. There is nothing naive about it; it goes hand in hand with discernment.

Vigilance is necessary so as not to be paralyzed by those who dramatize situations and nourish fear. Morosity is more contagious than joy and peace of heart. Often pessimistic or even threatening outlooks lend a certain authority to those who profess them.

During his life on earth, Christ, when mistreated, did not threaten anyone. <sup>20</sup> Today, risen from the dead, he never makes use of fear or anguish to force anyone to enter a way of the Gospel. <sup>21</sup>

**L**iving charity makes us attentive to those entrusted to us. <sup>22</sup> Communicating Christ to them calls for selflessness, so that we do not impose ourselves, but let the burning breath of the Gospel act.

The little you have communicated quite simply to a child, to an adolescent, can find a resonance in their soul that lasts their whole life long.

Will you go towards those who are most abandoned, towards humiliated children? Some are victims of incomprehensions, of broken relationships around them. Their

<sup>22</sup> The more we share what we have, in a spirit of great simplicity, the more life becomes welcoming for those who have been entrusted to us. Simplifying our daily life, therefore, makes it possible for us to welcome others even with a minimum of resources.

<sup>23</sup> We would like to do all in our power for the inner wound of these children to be healed and not mark them for life. If young people went to be with some of these children each week... Sharing their time with them, they could listen to them, talk with them, bring them to a common prayer. Often children or young people are troubled by the need for competition in their studies. A technological age intensifies an acute sense of success and failure from adolescence on: anyone who does not succeed according to the norms of society feels embarrassed and sometimes regrets not having the gifts of others. Wishing to have another's abilities makes it difficult for a person to discover his or her own gifts.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew 25,40.

<sup>25</sup> So many elderly people think they have been nothing and have accomplished nothing; they end their life in isolation, with at times nothing else to do but to wait for death. And yet some elderly persons, abounding in selflessness, are so indispensable for the younger generations. They are able to understand the young, to free them of certain burdens that they carry around. The Gospel speaks of spiritual mothers and fathers, given a hundredfold. If young people were to go and visit them in order to speak with them, and sometimes to help them fix up, decorate or repair their homes...

<sup>26</sup> All who live a life rooted in Christ gradually realize that Christ is communion. It is so important, therefore, to join the celebration of the local Christian community, the parish, where all the generations are present, from the very old to little children, and to renew a joy there.

<sup>27</sup> Why do we have such a deep aspiration for a reconciliation in that mystery of communion which is the Church? What captivates us is for Christians to make love for Christ credible. Christ will be recognized in the love that Christians have for one another (John 13,35). What captivates us is for Christians, reconciled by love, to be ferments of peace and trust. Over the last fifty years, many Christians have been made attentive to Christ's call to be reconciled "without delay" (Matthew 5,23-24). When reconciliation is put off to a later date, the ecumenical wave seems to fall back. "Without delay": this Gospel urgency presupposes much more than a new stage of ecumenism. The ecumenical vocation is seeking a kind of new birth.



innocence has been wounded.<sup>23</sup> "Whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters," says Jesus, "you do to me."<sup>24</sup>

And there are those whose advanced age envelops them in profound loneliness. Who will know how to listen for words from them which come from the Holy Spirit?<sup>25</sup>

Those who walk along the road of selflessness and kindness are brought closer and closer to a holiness that never isolates them, the holiness of Jesus, the Risen Lord.

What is true for one person is true as well for that unique communion which is the Church.<sup>26</sup> When tirelessly it listens and heals, when it lives out reconciliation,<sup>27</sup> the Church becomes what is most luminous about it: the limpid reflection of a love. Never distant, never on the defensive, it radiates the mystery of faith even into the human heart.<sup>28</sup>

Christ does not turn us into people who have made it.<sup>29</sup> He keeps us close to him, beings who are crystal-clear, transparent as the sky in springtime, a springtime that awakens.

By opening before us the gates of light, Christ enables us to sense that "beauty will save the world,"<sup>30</sup> , not a beauty of possession, but the beauty of a communion.<sup>31</sup>

"Christ is light for every human being in the world."<sup>32</sup> Will you be a bearer of a Gospel light? It shines afar, very far.

Risen Jesus, you welcome us with what we are. And, still more, by your life in us you accomplish this miracle: you set us free, you blot out the past, you lead us to love. Baptized in the Holy Spirit, we have clothed ourselves in Christ. And so, Christ, you remind each of us: you are my one and only, in you I find my joy.

Risen Jesus, we want to dispose ourselves inwardly so as not to forget that you love us, knowing that "all God can give is his love." You love each of us as your one and only, to such an extent that nothing, neither life nor death, can separate us from you.

<sup>28</sup> Alone, no one is able to understand the faith in its totality. So each person can say to themselves: in this communion which is the Church, what I do not understand, others understand and live. I do not lean only on my own faith, but also on the faith of Christians of all ages, from the Virgin Mary and the apostles down to those of the present day. And day after day, I dispose myself inwardly to place my trust in the Mystery of Faith.

For different reasons, some may find themselves in a situation where they do not receive the Eucharist. So, for centuries now, the story of the multiplication of the loaves has been a point of reference: one day Christ blessed five loaves of bread and distributed them to the crowd, to all without distinction. This generosity of which the Gospel speaks (Mark 6,30-44) has been translated by the gesture of offering blessed bread to all. That is an expression of the Church's motherly love. Rather than becoming upset about this or that impossibility of receiving Holy Communion, why not offer blessed bread to everyone? In this way, each and every person present at the celebration of the Eucharist, without exception, can receive a sign of sharing.

<sup>29</sup> Every kind of spiritual pretension disfigures Christ.

<sup>30</sup> Dostoyevsky, in *The Idiot*.

<sup>31</sup> Saint Irenaeus (130-208), had a luminous intuition of the beauty of a communion. He wrote: "The splendour of God is a human being fully alive, and the life of a human being is the contemplation of God." In his youth, Irenaeus had known an old man, Polycarp, who had himself been a disciple of Saint John the evangelist.

<sup>32</sup> John 1,9.

Risen Jesus, you keep on knocking at the door of our heart. And we are surprised to find ourselves telling you: the days went by and I did not respond; walls of hesitation had risen up, making me drift far from you, Christ, far from the Holy Spirit. And yet you were waiting, Risen Lord, not for a few crumbs, but for the whole of our life. And we managed to hear your voice whispering: "Come, follow me!"